

SECRET - NOBIS

NEGOTIATIONS, 1965-1966

This book includes five negotiating tracks:

- (1) Seaborn Missions (Canadian ICC Delegate Periodic Visits to Hanoi), June 1964 - June 1965.
- (2) Project Mayflower (the First U.S. Bombing Pause), May 12-18, 1965.
- (3) XYZ (U.S. Contacts with Mai Van Bo in Paris), May 19, 1965 - May 6, 1966.
- (4) Pinta-Rangoon (the Second U.S. Bombing Pause), December 24, 1965 - January 31, 1966.
- (5) Ronning Missions (Canadian Ambassador Extraordinary Visits to Hanoi), March and June, 1966.

Each section has a summary and analysis followed by a chronology (except Project Mayflower, which is told narratively).

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THE SEABORN MISSION TO HANOI, JUNE 1964-JUNE 1965

This paper considers US/DRV communications passed via the Canadian ICC Delegate, J. Blair Seaborn. It is in three parts: (1) a discussion of principal topics; (2) a summary description of Seaborn's main visits to Hanoi; and (3) a more detailed chronology extracted from cables, reports and memoranda. Part 3 contains the references underlying part 1; they are keyed in Part 1 by dates, in brackets.

Discussion

The messages carried by Seaborn were unusually substantive and dramatic. Possible (but quite different) settlement terms were sketched by both sides, but the main subject stressed repeatedly by each was its determination to do and endure whatever might be necessary to see the war to a conclusion satisfactory to it.

To the extent they believed each other, the two sides were amply forewarned that a painful contest lay ahead. Even so, they were not inclined to compromise their way out. They held very different estimates of the efficacy of US military might. We thought its pressures could accomplish our goals. The Communists did not.

Resolution to Win

Both sides gave strong warnings as early as June 1964. On Seaborn's first visit to Hanoi, he conveyed US determination "to contain the DRV to the territory allocated it" at Geneva 1954 and to see the GVN's writ run throughout SVN. US patience was running thin. If the conflict should escalate, "the greatest devastation would of course result for the DRV itself."^a He underlined the seriousness of US intentions by reminding his principal contact, Pham Van Dong, that the US commitment to SVN had implications extending far beyond SE Asia. (6/20/64)

^aAs reported in another study, Seaborn's was not the only warning given the DRV that June. Dillon also told the French Finance Minister, on the presumption it would be relayed to Hanoi, that we would use military force against the North if necessary to attain our objectives in SVN.

Pham Van Dong laughed and said he did indeed appreciate the problem. A US defeat in SVN would in all probability start a chain reaction extending much further. But the stakes were just as high for the NLF and its supporters, hence their determination to continue the struggle regardless of sacrifice. (6/20/64)

He did not specifically deny that there was DRV intervention in the South and said of the war in SVN, "We shall win." (Emphasis added.) But he also said "the DRV will not enter the war . . . we shall not provoke the US." (6/18/64) Perhaps he drew a distinction between existing levels of DRV intervention and "entering the war." He also warned that "if the war were pushed to the North, 'nous sommes un pays socialiste, un des pays socialistes, vous savez, et le peuple se dressera.'" (6/18/64) This is quite ambiguous, but does threaten further consequences should the DRV itself come under attack.

Although he clearly did not consider the DRV under attack at that time, he complained that "US military intervention" in Laos in the wake of the April 1964 coup was spilling over the frontier. "There are daily incursions of our air space across the Laotian border by overflights of military aircraft and by commando units bent on sabotage." (6/18/64)

Their positions stiffened after Tonkin. When Seaborn saw Pham Van Dong on August 13, he transmitted a blunt US refutation of the DRV's Tonkin Gulf account and an accusation that DRV behavior in the Gulf sought to cast the US as a paper tiger or to provoke the US.

Pham Van Dong answered angrily that there had been no DRV provocation. Rather, the US had found "it is necessary to carry the war to the North in order to find a way out of the impasse . . . in the South." He anticipated more attacks in the future and warned, "Up to now we have tried to avoid serious trouble; but it becomes more difficult now because the war has been carried to our territory . . . If war comes to North Vietnam, it will come to the whole of SE Asia. . . ." (8/13/64) .

He was thus ambiguous about whether he considered the war already carried to the North or yet to come and of course about that the consequences would be. As indicated in another study, however, it is now believed that the first organized NVA units infiltrated into SVN were dispatched from the DRV in August, 1964. (These units were being readied as early as April 1964. The date of the decision to dispatch them is, of course, unknown.) Meanwhile, Seaborn observed the North Vietnamese to be "taking various precautionary measures (air raid drills, slit trenches, brick bunkers, etc. and, reportedly at least, preparation for evacuation of women and children.)" (8/17/64)

4th Tonkin

The DRV position stiffened further after Pleiku. Seaborn returned to Hanoi in December, 1964, but at our request did not actively seek appointments with ranking leaders. He was to leave the initiative to them, but they did not seek him out either and he returned to Saigon without significant contact.

When he visited again, March 1-4, 1965, he was given a US message to convey to Pham Van Dong. The latter was "too busy", and he had to settle for Col. Ha Van Lau, NVA liaison to the ICC, who received him March 4. (3/5/65)

From Lau and others, he gathered that Hanoi was not seriously concerned by the US air strikes, considering them an attempt to improve US bargaining power at a conference the US strenuously desired. Hanoi's interpretation, he believed, was that the US realized it had lost the war and wanted to extricate itself; hence it was in Hanoi's interest to hold back -- a conference then might, as in 1954, deprive it of total victory. (3/7/65) DRV interest in Seaborn as a channel of communication with the US seemed to him virtually to have vanished, whereas it had been underlined by Pham Van Dong both in June and August. (3/5/65) On March 3, Mai Van Bo told the Quai in Paris that "while previously the DRV had been ready to consider negotiation of some sort, US actions had changed the situation. Negotiations (were) no longer a matter for consideration at this time." (3/4/65)

The May 1964 Bombing Pause brought no softening. The US/DRV impasse was again reflected in Seaborn's May 31-June 6 (1964) visit to Hanoi. On the one hand, Embassy Saigon expressed reservations about a passage in his instructions because it might "lead us towards a commitment to cease bombing simply in return for a cessation or reduction in VC armed actions in SVN." (5/23/64) On the other, Seaborn returned from Hanoi persuaded that the "DRV is not now interested in any negotiations." (6/7/64)

Opposing Proposals for Settling the War

The toughness of the two sides was reflected by large differences in their proposals for settling the war. The US wanted Hanoi to bring an end to armed resistance to the GVN in SVN. In exchange, it was willing to co-exist peacefully with the DRV, extending to it the possibility of economic and other beneficial relations enjoyed by Communist countries such as Poland and Yugoslavia. The US sought neither military bases in the region nor the overthrow of the regime in Hanoi. (6/1/64)

Pham Van Dong replied that a "just solution" in Indochina required (1) US withdrawal from Indochina; (2) the affairs of SVN to be arranged by the SVN people, with NLF participation; (3) "peace and neutrality for SVN, neutrality in the Cambodian manner"; and (4) reunification. He said that the idea of coalition government was snow-balling in SVN and that the Laos pattern of 1962 should serve as a guide for SVN.

When Seaborn expressed the fear that the NLF would take over any coalition in which it participated, Pham Van Dong said "there was no reason to have such fears." He also said that neutrality for SVN need not be considered only as a first step toward reunification. SVN would remain neutral as long as the "people of SVN" wished. (6/18/64)

These opening positions, sketched by the two sides during Seaborn's June 1964 visit, were swamped then and subsequently by the discussion of military measures and their possible consequences. The two sides were never close in their proposals, though in both cases their initial language was sufficiently flexible to permit subsequent bargaining and compromise. But their differing estimates of what would be accomplished in battle kept them from focusing the Seaborn exchange on settlement terms, and no reduction in their differences on settlement occurred after the first visit.

The Laotian Problem

Seaborn expressed US concern at DRV intervention in Laos on his June 1964 visit. Pham Van Dong replied, "We do not send units to the Pathet Lao." He leveled charges of US military intervention there and demanded a "return to the situation which existed prior to the April coup." To restore peace and neutrality in Laos, "a new conference of the 14 parties is necessary. . . . Only the 14 nation conference is competent to deal with the Laos situation."

The problem of Laos was not pursued in subsequent contacts.

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Summary

1964 Seaborn Conversations^a

June 1964. In his (June 18, 1964) meeting with Pham Van Dong (which took place with no one else present) Seaborn communicated a US message (a) emphasizing US determination to contain the DRV to the territory allocated it by the Geneva Agreements (1954), (b) reassuring the DRV that the US did not seek to overthrow the DRV or want military bases in SVN, (c) noting that the US was aware of Hanoi's control over the Viet Cong, (d) indicating that the US stake in resisting a DRV victory in SVN was increased by the relevance of this type of struggle to other areas of the Free World, (e) noting that US patience was growing thin, and (f) hinting at the benefits of "peaceful coexistence" to other Communist regimes.

Pham Van Dong clearly understood the message but declined "at present" to send any formal reply. He emphasized the key points in a "just solution" for the DRV were (a) a US withdrawal from SVN, (b) the establishment of a neutral "Cambodian-style" regime in SVN, in accordance with the NFL program, and (c) NFL participation in the determination of the fate of SVN when SVN was ready for negotiations. Pham emphasized the DRV's determination to continue with the struggle if the US increased its aid to the GVN and that the ultimate success of the Viet Cong was not in question. Pham denied that SVN's neutrality was only a first step, stating this was up to the people of the region. Pham did not specifically challenge Seaborn's observation that, while the NFL would have to be in a SVN coalition government, it did not represent all or even a majority of South Vietnamese. Pham added that there was no reason to fear that the NFL would take over a coalition government.

Pham told Seaborn that the DRV would not "force" or "provoke" the US. He concluded by stating that he looked forward to further talks with Seaborn and that the next time Seaborn could also see Ho Chi Minh.

Seaborn concluded from the conversation that one could not count on war weariness, factionalism, or the prospect of material benefits to bring the DRV to an accommodation with the US. He emphasized Pham's confidence in ultimate victory and conviction that military action could not bring the US success.

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^a This paper was drafted for State Department use by P.H.Kreisberg November 20, 1965.

Comment: My impression is that the general tone of the conversation did appear to offer some grounds for believing that at a subsequent discussion additional progress might be made toward preliminaries for concrete discussions. It should be noted that neither our message nor Pham's remarks raised the question of any direct contact or discussions between the US and the DRV.

August 1964. The key theme at the next meeting between Seaborn and Pham Van Dong on August 13, 1964 (this time in the presence of two other DRV observers) was the Tonkin Gulf incident. The US message conveyed by Seaborn rejected the DRV version of the incident, charged the DRV with deliberately planning the attack, and stated that as a result the US was increasing its military forces in SVN. The message also once more referred to possible economic and other benefits for the DRV if it halted its expansionism.

Pham's reaction was extremely angry. He said the US was seeking a way out by expanding the war to North Viet-Nam and that the US election campaign was also responsible for the stronger US line. He stressed the "very dangerous" nature of the situation, said the US might be led to "new acts of aggression", and warned that the DRV would fight a war if it came and that this would spread to all SEA and possibly further. He referred to support from other countries including Peking and Moscow. At the same time he said the DRV had tried for peace but the US did not want it. He urged the ICC to take a more important role and seek a solution "on the basis of the Geneva Agreements." He emphasized that he found the Seaborn link useful and wanted to keep the channel open.

Seaborn commented on the meeting that Pham Van Dong's reaction was not surprising in view of the blunt US rebuttal of the official DRV position and that the DRV might actually believe there was a chance of new US attacks. He found no evident DRV concern over the firmness of the US message, however, and noted that Pham's reaction had been one of anger rather than of seeking a way out. Seaborn was encouraged by Pham's desire to keep the channel of communication open but thought Pham continued to be "genuinely convinced" that things were going the DRV's way and there was no need to compromise.

Comment: The negotiating content of this meeting was totally barren as a result of its timing and its complete focus on the events immediately preceding it rather than on broader issues as had been adumbrated at the June meeting. Pham made no effort to develop his remarks in June or to bring Seaborn together with Ho. The participation of other DRV observers, including a note taker, in the meeting may also have forced an increased formality, coldness, and rigidity in Pham Van Dong's remarks as compared with those in June. There is no question,

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however, that there was no indication of "give" in Pham's position and that the only note of "encouragement" was his continuing desire to keep lines of communication open.

December 1964: On Seaborn's visit to Hanoi in December he carried no US message, it having been agreed that it was now up to Hanoi to take some initiative. Seaborn did not actively seek appointments with any ranking DRV leaders but did make it clear that he was available if anyone he had seen earlier wished to see him again. He saw Pham Van Dong informally at a social gathering but Pham did not use the opportunity to discuss substantive matters or seek a further appointment with him. Seaborn was told other DRV leaders were away or unavailable. Seaborn told junior DRV officials of continued US firmness and of the possibility that further US counteraction might be taken.

Comment: The complete aridity of this visit suggests that the DRV had changed its mind about using Seaborn as a channel of communication, was not prepared to make any new or forward proposals on negotiations, or--contrary to our own conclusion--believed the initiative to make some new offer lay in the US court and that if Seaborn was carrying no new message there was no point in carrying on the exchange at that time.

Over-all Comment: I believe that the August and December meetings support the tenor of your memorandum to Mr. Ball but that this is less certain in the case of the June conversation. I also believe specific note should be taken of the fact that Seaborn did not specifically request an interview at a high level in December. It might be put that Hanoi made no effort in December when Seaborn was there to renew its discussions or put forward any new proposal for negotiations or meetings.

The Seaborn Approach to Hanoi ^b

March 1965: At our request, Blair Seaborn, Chief Canadian representative on the International Control Commission in Vietnam, gave the Hanoi authorities on March that portion of Ambassador Cabot's February 24 statement to WANG Kuo-chuan in Warsaw dealing with Vietnam. We hoped thus to convince the North Vietnamese that the United States has no designs on their territory nor any desire to destroy them. Seaborn, at our suggestion, sought an appointment with the Prime Minister, but was obliged to settle for a meeting with the chief of the North Vietnamese Army's Liaison Section, to whom he read the

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^b This paper was prepared for State Department use. Its date of preparation and drafter are not indicated. Sub-headings have been supplied.

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statement. This officer commented that it contained nothing new and that the North Vietnamese already received a briefing on the Warsaw meeting from the Chicom. The Canadian Government publicly noted in April that Seaborn had two important conversations with DRV officials in recent months, but did not go into details.

June 1965. In May we again asked Seaborn to seek an appointment with Pham Van Dong and on our behalf reiterate the March message and our determination to persist in the defense of South Vietnam, to regret that Hanoi had not responded positively to the various recent initiatives, including the bombing pause, and to state that, nevertheless, the United States remained ready "to consider the possibility of a solution by reciprocal actions on each side." If the Vietnamese brought up Pham Van Dong's four points, Seaborn was authorized to endeavor to establish whether Hanoi insisted that they be accepted as the condition for suspension, that we planned to inform Hanoi separately, and that we expected Hanoi would find easily detectable means of displaying that it understood the message.

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May 1, 1964

STATE 1821 (S/EXDIS), Priority, to AmEmbassy Saigon, Sent 1 May 1964.

FOR THE AMBASSADOR FROM THE SECRETARY

I flew up to Ottawa yesterday to talk with Mike Pearson and Martin concerning the Canadian presence in Hanoi. . . .

They readily agreed that Seaborn should plan to spend much more time in Hanoi than have his predecessors in this assignment. They also accept as part of his mission an effort to establish ready access to and close contact with senior authorities in Hanoi, beginning with Ho Chi Minh. . . .

Following are some of the matters which we roughed out in Ottawa and which I will have further developed here. . . .

1. Seaborn should start out by checking as closely as he can what is on Ho Chi Minh's mind. We want to know whether he considers himself over-extended and exposed, or whether he feels confident that his Chinese allies will back him to the hilt. We want to know whether his current zeal is being forced upon him by pro-Chinese elements in his own camp, or whether he is impelled by his own ambitions.

2. Seaborn should get across to Ho and his colleagues the full measure of US determination to see this thing through. He should draw upon examples in other parts of the world to convince them that if it becomes necessary to enlarge the military action, this is the most probable course that the US would follow.

3. Seaborn should spread the word that he is puzzled by Hanoi's intentions. The North Vietnamese should understand that the US wants no military bases or other footholds in South Viet Nam or Laos. If Hanoi would leave its neighbors alone, the US presence in the area would diminish sharply.

4. The North Vietnamese should understand that there are many examples in which the Free World has demonstrated its willingness to live in peace with communist neighbors and to permit the establishment of normal economic relations between these two different systems. We recognize North Viet Nam's need for trade, and especially food, and consider that such needs could be fulfilled if peaceful conditions were to prevail.

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Pearson also agreed to instruct Seaborn and his people in general to work more actively on trying to break the Poles off from constant and active espousal of North Vietnamese aggression. He felt, however, that the Poles are playing something of a middle role in Sino-Soviet matters these days and doubted that there would be much profit in this.

Sullivan/RUSK

→ May 15, 1964

AmEmb Saigon 2212 (S/Nodis), Rec'd 15 May 64, 7:2 A.M.

FOR THE PRESIDENT FROM LODGE

3. If prior to the Canadian's trip to Hanoi there has been a terroristic act of the proper magnitude, then I suggest that a specific target in North Viet Nam be considered as a prelude to his arrival. The Vietnamese Air Force must be made capable of doing this, and they should undertake this type of action.

4. I much prefer a selective use of Vietnamese Air power to an over U.S. effort perhaps involving the total annihilation of all that has been built in North Viet Nam since 1954, because this would surely bring in the Chinese Communists, and might well bring in the Russians. Moreover, if you lay the whole country waste, it is quite likely that you will induce a mood of fatalism in the Viet Cong. Also, there will be nobody left in North Viet Nam on whom to put pressure. Furthermore, South Viet Nam's infrastructure might well be destroyed. What we are interested in here is not destroying Ho Chi Minh (as his successor would probably be worse than he is), but getting him to change his behavior. That is what President Kennedy was trying to do in October with Diem and with considerable success.

6. This is a procedure the intensity of which we can constantly control and bring up to the point to which we think the Communist reaction would cease to be manageable. It should be covert and undertaken by the Vietnamese, but, of course, we must be clear in our own minds that we are ready and able to take care of whatever reaction there may be.

7. It is easy for us on the one hand to ignore our superiority as we did at the time of Berlin in 1948 (when we still had sole possession of the atomic bomb). It is also a relatively simple concept to go out and destroy North Viet Nam. What is complicated,

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but really effective, is to bring our power to bear in a precise way so as to get specific results.

8. Another advantage of this procedure is that when, as and if the time ever came that our military activities against the North became overt, we would be in a strong moral position both with regard to U.S. public opinion, the U.S. Congress, and the U.N. I say this because we would then have a record to show that we had given Ho Chi Minh fair warning to stop his murderous interference in the internal affairs of Viet Nam. Not only would we have given him fair warning, but we would have given him honest and valuable inducements in the way of some withdrawal of American personnel and in the way of economic aid, notably food. . . .

LODGE

May 22, 1964

STATE 2049 to AmEmb SAIGON (TS/NODIS), Priority, Sent 22 May 64, 7:40 P.M.

LITERALLY EYES ONLY FOR AMBASSADOR FROM SECRETARY

2. . . . in light of present Canadian attitudes we tend to see real difficulty in approaching the Canadians at this time with any message as specific as you suggest, i.e., that Hanoi be told by the Canadians "that they will be punished." But we are keeping this in mind and will see whether we can go further when we consult them next week than the more general type of message stated in my 1821. As you can see, the more specific message might lead us into a very difficult dialogue with the Canadians as to just what our plans really were.

3. On the other question, whether initial substantial attacks could be left without acknowledgement, it is our present view here that this would simply not be feasible. . . . Once such publicity occurred, I think you can see that the finger would point straight at us and that the President would then be put in perhaps a far more difficult position toward the American public and the Congress.

4. Thus, we are using a GVN- or US-acknowledged enterprise as part of our main planning track at the present time, although we do recognize that something a little stronger than the present OPLAN 34-A might be carried on on the basis you propose.

BUNDY

May 25, 1964

AmEmbassy SAIGON 2305 (TS/Nodis), Rec'd 25 May 64, 5:22 AM.

LITERALLY EYES ONLY FOR THE SECRETARY FROM LODGE

1. It is not rpt not at all necessary that the Canadians either agree or disagree. What is important is that the Canadian transmit the message and be willing to do that and report back accurately what is said. . . .

2. The Communists have a great advantage over us in that they do things and never talk about them. We must not rpt not let them continue to have this advantage. . . .

LODGE

May 26, 1964

AmEmbassy SAIGON 2318 (TS/Nodis), Rec'd 26 May 64, 3:30 A.M.

LITERALLY EYES ONLY FOR THE SECRETARY FROM LODGE

1. . . .

2. I am coming to the conclusion that we cannot reasonably and prudently expect a much better performance out of the CVN than that which we are now getting unless something new of this kind is brought into the picture. . . .

LODGE

May 30, 1964

STATE 2133 to Amembassy SAIGON (TS/Exdis), Priority, Sent 30 May 1964, 10:40 A.M.

FOR THE AMBASSADOR FROM THE ACTING SECRETARY

President and Mac Bundy met May 28 in New York with Canadian Prime Minister Pearson. Simultaneously Sullivan met in Ottawa with Foreign Minister Martin, Deputy Under Secretary Smith, and ICC Commissioner-Designate Seaborn.

President told Pearson that he wishes Hanoi to know, that while he is a man of peace, he does not intend to permit the North Vietnamese to take over Southeast Asia. He needs a confidential and responsible interlocutor to carry the message of US attitudes to Hanoi. In outlining the US position there was some discussions of QTE carrots and sticks UNQUOTE.

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Pearson, after expressing willingness to lend Canadian good offices to this endeavor, indicated some concern about this nature of the QTE sticks UNQTE. He stipulated that he would have great reservations about the use of nuclear weapons, but indicated that the punitive striking of discriminate targets by careful iron bomb attacks would be QTE a different thing UNQTE. He said he would personally understand our resort to such measures if the messages transmitted through the Canadian channel failed to produce any alleviation of North Vietnamese aggression, and that Canada would transmit messages around this framework.

In Ottawa Sullivan found much the same disposition among Canadian officials. While Foreign Minister Martin seemed a little nervous about the prospect of QTE expanding the war UNQTE, External Affairs officials readily assented to the use of Seaborn as an interlocutor.

Seaborn, who struck Sullivan as an alert, intelligent and steady officer, readily agreed to these conditions and has made immediate plans for an accelerated departure.

BALL

June 1, 1964

Memo To: G - Mr. U. Alexis Johnson, from S/VN - Joseph A. Mendelhall,
dated June 1, 1964 (TS)

Subject: Instructions for Canadian Interlocutor with Hanoi.

I am enclosing a copy of the "Outline of Subjects for Mr. Seaborn" which Bill Sullivan prepared prior to departure for Honolulu. He gave a copy of this general paper of instructions to Mr. Robinson, Minister-Counselor of the Canadian Embassy, on May 30.

At your request I have prepared and am enclosing a draft of a further outline in specific terms of the message which we would expect the Canadian interlocutor to get across in Hanoi. This further outline is based on the assumptions that (a) a U.S. decision has been taken to act against North Viet-Nam and (b) we plan to use "carrots" as well as a "stick" on Hanoi. I believe that we would probably not wish to hand this further outline to the Canadian Government pending the initial soundings of the Canadian interlocutor in Hanoi pursuant to Mr. Sullivan's original set of instructions.

Enclosures:

1. Outline of Subjects for Mr. Seaborn.
2. Further Outline for Mr. Seaborn.

OUTLINE OF SUBJECTS FOR MR. SEABORN

1. The President wishes Hanoi to understand that he is fundamentally a man of peace. However, he does not intend to let the North Vietnamese take over all of Southeast Asia. He wishes to have a highly confidential, responsible interlocutor who will deliver this message to the authorities in Hanoi and report back their reaction.

2. The messages which may be transmitted through this channel would involve an indication of the limitations both upon US ambitions in Southeast Asia and upon US patience with Communist provocation. The interlocutor of his Government need not agree with not associate themselves with the messages that are passed. The only requirement is that there be faithful transmittal of the messages in each direction.

3. Mr. Seaborn should arrive in Hanoi as soon as possible and establish his credentials as a political personality who can and will deal with senior representatives of the Hanoi regime.

4. Mr. Seaborn should also, by listening to the arguments and observing the attitudes of the North Vietnamese, form an evaluation of their mental outlook. He should be particularly alert to (a) differences with respect to the Sino-Soviet split, (b) frustration of war weariness, (c) indications of North Vietnamese desire for contacts with the West, (d) evidences of cliques or factions in the Party or Government, and (e) evidence of differences between the political and the military.

5. Mr. Seaborn should explore the nature and the prevalence of Chinese Communist influence in North Viet Nam; and perhaps through direct discussions with the Soviet representatives, evaluate the nature and influence of the Soviets.

6. Mr. Seaborn should stress to appropriate North Vietnamese officials that US policy is to see to it that North Viet Nam contains itself and its ambitions within the territory allocated to its administration by the 1954 Geneva Agreements. He should stress that US policy in South Viet Nam is to preserve the integrity of that state's territory against guerrilla subversion.

7. He should state that the US does not seek military bases in the area and that the US is not seeking to overthrow the Communist regime in Hanoi.

8. He should stipulate that the US is fully re of the degree to which Hanoi controls and directs the guerrilla ion in South Viet Nam and that the US holds Hanoi directly responsible for that action. He should similarly indicate US awareness of North Vietnamese control over the Pathet Lao movement in Laos and the degree of North Vietnamese involvement in that country. He should specifically indicate US awareness of North Vietnamese violations of Laotian territory along the infiltration route into South Viet Nam.

9. Mr. Seaborn should point out that the nature of US commitment in South Viet Nam is not confined to the territorial issue in question. He should make it clear that the US considers the confrontation with North Vietnamese subversive guerrilla action as part of the general Free World confrontation with this type of violent subversion in other lesser developed countries. Therefore, the US stake in resisting a North Vietnamese victory in South Viet Nam has a significance of world-wide proportions.

10. Mr. Seaborn can point to the many examples of US policy in tolerance of peaceful coexistence with Communist regimes, such as Yugoslavia, Poland, etc. He can hint at the economic and other benefits which have accrued to those countries because their policy of Communism has confined itself to the development of their own national territories and has not sought to expand into other areas.

11. Mr. Seaborn can couple this statement with the frank acknowledgement that US public and official patience with North Vietnamese aggression is growing extremely thin.

12. Insofar as Mr. Seaborn considers it might be educational he could review the relative military strengths of the US, North Viet Nam, and the available resources of Communist China in Southeast Asia.

13. In sum, the purpose of Mr. Seaborn's mission in North Viet Nam would be as an interlocutor with both active and passive functions. On the passive side, he should report either observations or direct communications concerning North Vietnamese attitude toward extrication from or escalation of military activities. On the active side, he should establish his credentials with the North Vietnamese as an authoritative channel of communications with the US. In each of these functions it would be hoped that Mr. Seaborn would assume the posture that the decision as to the future course of events in Southeast Asia rests squarely with Hanoi.

FURTHER OUTLINE FOR MR. SEABORN

1. The U.S. objective is to maintain the independence and territorial integrity of South Viet-Nam. This means that the South Vietnamese Government in Saigon must be able to exercise its authority throughout the territory south of the 17th Parallel without encountering armed resistance directed and supported by Hanoi.

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2. We know that Hanoi can stop the war in South Viet-Nam if it will do so. The virtually complete cease-fires which have obtained at Tet time for the past two years demonstrate the ability of Hanoi to control all Viet Cong operations in South Viet-Nam if it has the will to do so.

3. In order to stop the war in South Viet-Nam the United States is prepared to follow alternative courses of action with respect to North Viet-Nam.

(a) Unless Hanoi stops the war within a specified time period (i.e., ceases all attacks, acts of terror, sabotage or armed propaganda or other armed resistance to government authority by the VC), the United States will initiate action by air and naval means against North Viet-Nam until Hanoi does agree to stop the war.

(b) If Hanoi will agree to stop the war, the United States will take the following steps:

(1) Undertake to obtain the agreement of Saigon to a resumption of trade between North Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam, which would be helpful to North Viet-Nam in view of the complementarity of the two zones of Viet-Nam and the food difficulties now suffered by North Viet-Nam.

(2) Initiate a program of foodstuffs assistance to North Viet-Nam either on a relief grant basis under Title II of Public Law 480 or on a sales for local currency basis under Title I PL-480 (as in Poland and Yugoslavia).

(3) Remove U.S. foreign assets controls from the assets of North Viet-Nam and reduce controls on U.S. trade with North Viet-Nam to the level now applicable to the USSR (i.e., strategic items only).

(4) Recognize North Viet-Nam diplomatically and, if Hanoi is interested, undertake an exchange of diplomatic representatives.

(5) Remove U.S. forces from South Viet-Nam on a phased basis, winding up with a reduction to the level of 350 military advisors or trainers as permitted under the Geneva Accords. (This was the number of U.S. military personnel in Viet-Nam when the Geneva Accords were signed in 1954.)

4. If Hanoi stops resistance in South Viet-Nam, the United States and South Vietnamese Governments will permit Hanoi to withdraw any Viet Cong personnel whom it may wish from South Viet-Nam. The Government of South Viet-Nam will also make a clear public announcement of full amnesty for all rebels who discontinue armed resistance to the authority of the Government.

June 18, 1964

STATE 115 to Anembassy SAIGON (TS/Exdis), Sent Jul 11, 1964, 5:19 P.M.

Embtel 74.

As requested final paragraph reftel, texts first two Seaborn messages sent Ottawa follow:

1. June 20, 1964 message.

QTE. Initial visit to Hanoi: Call on PM Pham Van Dong.

PM received me for hour and a half Thurs morning Jun 18 with only Lt Col Mai Lam, number two man of PAVN liaison mission, present. Conversation was entirely in French with no RPT no use of Vietnamese and interpretation which had been practice in earlier lower level calls on Vice Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs.

2. After very brief preliminaries, I told PM that I had on instructions specially requested interview with him and/or President Ho Chi Minh as I had oral msg to convey from PM Pearson. Perhaps best explanation was to be found in my TSEC instructions from my PM which I was authorized to show him. Pham Van Dong read let of May 30 from PM Pearson to myself carefully once and then quickly again. He said he greatly appreciated role Canada had undertaken to play, which he felt was important and desirable, and wished me also personal success in task. From tone of conversation thereafter, I believe Pham Van Dong has understood and accepted and perhaps welcomed my role as intermediary.

3. I said that I hoped he would let me elaborate on very general lines of my instructions from PM and in effect to convey to him first general msg from USA Govt. I prefaced msg by citing our close and friendly relationship with USA, our good understanding of American intentions and aspirations, and our constant detailed and intimate exchange of views and info with USA which gave us excellent insight into American thinking. On this basis, we were convinced that President Johnson was man of peace, that he would take pains to avoid and avert situations which could lead to confrontation between major powers, but that insofar as Southeast Asia was concerned he was determined that it would not RPT not fall under Communist control as result of subversion and guerrilla warfare. Intentions in Southeast Asia were essentially peaceful and USA ambitions were limited, but USA was also determined and its patience before provocation was not RPT not limitless.

4. This said, I went on to convey USA msg, following as closely as I could, though not RPT not necessarily in same order, points made in paras 6 through 11 of WASHDC tel 1951 May 30. In course of conversation, I made all these points explicitly and without circumlocution

and in some cases with elaboration and repetition. I shall not RPT not therefore repeat them in this tel. I did not RPT not specifically make point in para 12 other than to say that if conflict in area should escalate, which I did not RPT not think was in anyone's interest, the greatest devastation would of course result for the DRVN itself.

5. I am convinced from later conversation that Pham Van Dong understood importance and context of msg I conveyed and seriousness with which USA views situation in Southeast Asia. To that extent, initial purpose of first contact has been successfully accomplished, he gave me careful hearing with no RPT no attempt to interrupt, disagree, contradict or even express displeasure even to assertions which were clearly unpalatable or with which he would not RPT not agree, e.g. Viet Minh complicity in Pathet Lao activities and SVN insurgency and DRVN responsibility for future development of situation in area. This is not RPT not of course to say that I convinced him of correctness of USA interpretations (which obviously I did not RPT not) nor that he fully believes even yet firmness and durability of USA determination in area. He could not RPT not however claim that he has not RPT not had USA views and intentions conveyed to him most explicitly.

6. I concluded opening statement by saying I was at Prime Minister's disposal now or at any later stage to convey to USA via Ottawa any msg he wished to give me orally or in writing. He said he had no RPT no immediate and specific msg to send at this time, but that he would like to expound on DRVN point of view with particular ref to points I had raised in my comment. I shall be sending subsequently detailed report, based on notes made as he talked, of Prime Minister's remarks in his main statement and in course of subsequent discussion. In his initial tel however I shall merely summarize what appears to me to be his main points and give my first impressions.

7. Pham Van Dong opened remarks by saying we must learn to coexist and to find solution to problem which has wracked Indochina for 25 years. But just solution is only way to provide stability. What just solution means in DRVN is, as President Ho Chi Minh has explained (A) USA withdrawal (B) peace and neutrality for SVN in Cambodian pattern in accordance with programme of Liberation Front which must participate in determination of Vietnam as result of negotiation when SVN ready for negotiation.

8. PM said USA must demonstrate what he would consider good will but he realized it will not RPT not be easy for USA to do so. USA can increase aid to SVN in all fields, give greater material support to SVN army and increase its own army personnel also. If so, war will be prolonged and intensified, but QTE our people UNQTE will go on struggling and resisting. QTE It is impossible for westerners to understand

* strength of people's will to resist, to continue, to struggle. It has astonished us too UNQTE. Prospect for USA and friends is QTE sans issue UNQTE. SVN mercenaries and USA soldiers do not RPT not have heart in fighting whereas support for objective of Liberation Front is growing among Buddhists, students, intellectuals. Lippmann sees no RPT no light at end of tunnel and others speak of new Dien Bien Phu.

9. DRVN Govt, said PM, did not RPT not yet have concrete suggestions to put forward, but this was general line of their thinking.

10. In separate tel without "Bacon" restrictions I shall report in greater detail PM's comments on Laos situation. Essence of his remarks was (A) only viable solution was return to status quo ante April coup d'etat and Govt. of National Coalition as per Geneva Accord of 1962 (B) necessity of convening 14 nation conference to achieve this result and (C) essentiality of no RPT no American interference in Laos. He said DRVN was very worried by step-up of USA military activities in Laos and complained of USA overflights of DRVN territory and of commando raids across border. He denied that PAVN had sent QTE units UNQTE across border to aid Pathet Lao but did not RPT not specifically deny my earlier statement that USA was aware DRVN were helping Pathet Lao and Viet Cong with men, arms and material.

11. Returning to question of SVN, Pham Van Dong said situation could be summed up as choice between QTE guerre a outrance UNQTE which USA cannot RPT not win in any event in the long run or alternatively neutrality for SVN.

12. I thanked PM for detailed expose of DRVN views which I said I would transmit faithfully to my govt. At this he said disarmingly that I might not RPT not believe all he had said but he wanted to assure me he has spoken in all sincerity and frankness. I shall not RPT not be so rash as to comment on this other than to say that he took pains throughout interview to give impression of quiet sincerity, of realization of seriousness of what we were discussing and of lack of truculence of belligerency. Certainly in presence and mental stature PM is head and shoulders above few other North Vietnamese whom I met and undoubtedly an impressive Communist personality by any standards.

13. At this stage I told PM I had no RPT no further formal message to convey but that I would like to put a few personal comments and questions.

14. I said I was interested to hear from him that as a condition for restoring peace SVN should become neutral as a first step prior to reunification. He stepped me and said he had not RPT not referred to neutrality as a first step only. Whether SVN would continue neutral would depend upon people of SVN. He did not RPT nor prejudge. As for Liberation Front I said I realized it represents a certain force in SVN, though not RPT not in my view all people as the propaganda asserted nor even majority. He did not RPT not demur at this downgrading. I said I appreciated that the Front would have to

participate should a coalition ever emerge. My fear however was that coalition would soon be taken over by Front as had happened in other countries and that other rep elements would suffer or be ousted. PM merely said there was no RPT no reason to have such fears.

15. I then asked whether PM appreciated fully that USA's continued acceptance of obligations towards allies in SVN had implications which extended far beyond Southeast Asia and related to USA determination to resist guerrilla subversion in Asia, Africa and Latin-America? PM laughed and said he did indeed appreciate it. A USA defeat in SVN would in all probability start a chain reaction which would extend much farther, but USA should understand that principles and stakes involved were just as high for Liberation Front in SVN and its supporters and this helped to explain their determination to continue to struggle regardless of sacrifice.

16. PM said he was glad to hear that USA did not RPT not have aggressive intentions against DRVN and did not RPT not intend to attack it. I corrected him at this point and said USA did not RPT not want to carry war to north but might be obliged to do so if pushed too far by continuation of Viet Minh-assisted pressures in SVN. I repeated that USA patience was not RPT not limitless. PM said if war was pushed to north, QTE nous sommes un pays socialistes, un des pays socialistes, vous savez, et le peuple se dressera UNQTE. (This was the closest he came at any time to hinting that DRVN could or would count on outside assistance in event of attack). But, he said, we shall not RPT not provoke them.

17. Conversation had now continued for almost hour and a half and PM made move as if to terminate, so I did not RPT not put further questions. He asked me to send greetings to PM Pearson and to say that if my mission could contribute to this (grp missing) solution Canada would have done something very useful. I said I felt it was at minimum essential that no RPT no irrevocable steps be taken due to misunderstanding of intentions and objectives and that USA felt this strongly too. PM agreed, and said he looked forward to further conversation during my next (grp missing) when I would certainly meet Ho Chi Minh. President was on leave at present but had send greetings. I closed by thanking him for time given me and repeating I was at his disposal anytime he wished to see me.

18. In separate msg I shall report first very tentative impressions on questions asked in paras four and five of WASHDC tel 1951 May 30.

19. I expect to be seeing Mr. Lodge shortly after my return to Saigon (this tel is being drafted in plane enroute from Hanoi) and will show him copy.

20. I would welcome comments from you and State Department and any suggestions for talking points for further conversations on next visit to Hanoi. END QUOTE

TOP SECRET - HODIS

2. June 22, 14 message.

QUOTE. DRVN: Attitudes and Outlook.

To convey specific msg and to report DRVN comment is relatively simple. To attempt evaluation suggested paras 4 and 5 WASHDC tel 1951 May 30 is extremely difficult on basis of 3 day visit and a few conversations especially for someone who has never had previous direct experience with Asia let alone Vietnam. Following comments, to be read in conjunction with my ref tel, are therefore highly tentative and consist mainly of negative evidence.

Sino-Soviet split and prevalence of Chinese Communist influence:

2. No RPT no Vietnamese with whom I spoke made even ref by name to USSR or China. My enquiry of Vice-Foreign Minister Tien as to DRVN views on latest Soviet call for mtg on world CPS drew reply that question concerned party only and was not RPT not within competence of Foreign Ministry. To direct question he said DRVN had not RPT not commented on latest Moscow call but general views could be found in press. Eastern Europeans were closed mouthed on this issue. PM made only most oblique ref to DRVN's membership in group of socialist countries in context of possible results of USA taking war to north.

3. French Del Gen Debuzon asserts DRVN leaders are honestly concerned by bad effect of split on fortunes of World Communist Movement and have avoided polemics against USSR even when adopting Peking line. He thinks they fear definitive rupture which would (throw?) them fully under Chinese control, a fate they hope to resist as long as possible. They are not RPT not however strong enough to play dispute for their own purposes as have Romanians.

4. In economic field, probes with Vietnamese and Eastern Europeans were little more rewarding. Strong Vietnamese emphasis at present in official propaganda and in private conversation is on lifting up by own boot-straps and near autarchy. During lengthy tour of exhibition of ten years of DRVN, guide RPT guide managed to describe economic progress for at least half hour without once mentioning aid received from other socialist countries, (though?) when questioned Director admitted it had been great with lion's share by USSR and China. Reps of smaller Eastern European powers told me of their relatively modest aid and trade but would not RPT not be drawn on relative weight of Soviet and Chinese aid. Soviet Charge said that Soviet aid in form of technicians and training of students in USSR had diminished as DRVN capacity for training own cadres had grown. He admitted Chinese were still very active in aid field but would not RPT not be specific.

5. Foreign rep in Hanoi tell me Chinese technicians ETC are not RPT not much in evidence but this proves little. Unskilled eye can easily fail to distinguish between North Vietnamese and Southern Chinese.

Cliques in factions in Party or Govt:

6. I can add nothing from observation or conversation in Hanoi to analysis of commonly accepted line-up of pro-Chinese extremists and pro-Soviet moderates other than to draw attention to moderateness of Pham Van Dong's tone during interview of Ho Chi Minh appears still to enjoy tremendous prestige and is venerated as demi-God, perhaps above any factional strife, non-Communist reps in Hanoi and Nationalist Chinese Ambassador here warn against overemphasis on factionalism as (something?) from which West might derive benefit. National pride is apparent from Pham Van Dong's remarks and from call for economic self-help.

Differences between political and military:

7. I can adduce no RPT no evidence one way or the other.

Frustration or war weariness:

8. I can bring forward no RPT no evidence that such (exists?) and indeed all Vietnamese emphasized quiet determination to go on struggling as long as necessary to achieve in long run. While some discount should perhaps be made for fact they were speaking to me, these assertions carried a good deal of conviction as if really believed. This applies particularly strongly to Pham Van.

9. Hanoi itself though austere looked much less run down than I expected. Team site officers and others who have been north over course of year say supply of consumer goods while still pitifully small (has?) increased markedly. I saw some queues but no RPT no evidence of malnutrition nor RPT nor did I find people looking markedly sadder or more serious than those in south. Team site officers have seen no RPT no evidence of over discontent among people.

Desire for contacts with West:

10. Pham Van Dong seemed genuinely grateful for intermediary role Canada was trying to plan and also I think for USA desire to get msg through. It will take subsequent visits to decide whether this reflects interest in or desire to emerge from isolation, let alone interest in any accommodation or settlement of Laos and SVN problem.

Conclusions.

11. Tentative conclusion is that we would be unwise at this stage to count on war weariness or factionalism within leadership or possible material advantages to DRVN or kind of Asian Tito-ism as of such importance to cause DRVN to jump at chance of reaching accommodation with USA in this area. Certainly on my brief visit I detected no RPT no evidence to suggest (as some columnists have been doing) that starvation, war weariness and political discontent are bringing regime close to collapse and that they would therefore grasp at any straw which might enable them to save something before country falls apart.

12. Prospect of war being carried to north may give greater pause for thought. But I would hesitate to say that DRVN are yet convinced, despite USA public statements and moves and private msg I have conveyed, that USA really would be prepared to take this step, ultimate consequences of which could be start of World War III. I am also inclined to think that DRVN leaders are completely convinced that military action at any level is not RPT not going to bring success for USA and Govt forces in SVN. They are almost as completely convinced that Khanh Govt is losing ground on political front and are confident that in fullness of time success is assured for Liberation Front supported by DRVN.

13. I would however caution on the extreme difficulty of forming meaningful judgements on basis of brief or even longer period spent in North Vietnam, which is a singularly closed society even by Communist standards. Press is very uninformative and I suspect that most foreign reps including those of Eastern Europe know little of what is going on. Soviet and Chinese Ambassadors are probably only ones taken at all into DRVN confidence and councils and I am not RPT not sanguine about former, who was unfortunately absent during my visit, opening up to me at least on first mtg. I shall persevere of course with foreign reps and North Vietnamese but the limitations should be fully understood.

END QUOTE

BALL

Remarks of Prime Minister Pham Van Dong
to J.B. Seahorn, Hanoi, June 18, 1964

President Ho Chi Minh has explained what we mean by a just solution. First it requires an American withdrawal from Indochina. Secondly it means that the affairs of the South must be arranged by the people of the South. It must provide for the participation of the Liberation Front. No other group represents the broad wishes of the people. The programme of the Front is the best one possible. There must be peace and neutrality for South Vietnam, neutrality in the Cambodian manner. Thirdly, a just solution means re-unification of the country. This is a "drame, national, fondamentale". But we want peaceful reunification, without military pressures. We want peaceful reunification, without military pressures. We want negotiation 'round a table. There must be sincere satisfaction with the arrangement for it to be viable. We are in no hurry. We are willing to talk but we shall wait till SVN is ready. We are a divided people, without even personal links across the dividing line.

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The United States must show good will, but it is not easy for the USA to do so. Meanwhile the war intensifies. USA aid may increase in all areas, not only for the SVN army but in terms of USA army personnel as well. I suffer to see the war go on, develop, intensify. Yet our people are determined to struggle. It is impossible, quite impossible (excuse me for saying this) for you Westerners to understand the force of the people's will to resist and to continue. The struggle of the people exceeds the imagination. It has astonished us too.

Since the fall of the Ngo brothers, it has been a "cascade". The prospect for the USA and its friends in SVN is "sans issue". Reinforcing the Khanh army doesn't count. The people have had enough. The SVN mercenaries have sacrificed themselves without honour. The Americans are not loved, for they commit atrocities. How can the people suffer such exactions and terror?

Let me stress, insofar as the internal situation in SVN is concerned, the realistic nature of the Liberation Front's programme. It is impossible to have a representative government which excludes the Front. The idea of a government of national coalition "fait boucle de nœud" in the South. The Laos pattern of 1962 should serve as a guide for SVN.

As for Laos, we are not reassured by the USA role. We must return to the '62 Geneva Accord. The present government of Laos is "fantoche". Souvanna Phouma, who is no better than a prisoner of the military, has acted like a coward. His present government provides no solution.

We do not send units to the Pathet Lao. We do not demand more than a return to the situation which existed prior to the April coup. But there must be no American interference in Laos. There are daily incursions of our air space across the Laotian border by overflights of military aircraft and by commando units bent on sabotage.

A new conference of the fourteen parties is necessary. Restoration of peace and neutrality for Laos are impossible otherwise. There is little utility in the Polish proposal. Only the 14-nation conference is competent to deal with the Laos situation.

To return to Vietnam, it is a question of a "guerre à outrance", which the USA won't win in any event, or neutrality. He had not (as I had suggested) referred to neutrality as a first step only. Whether SVN would continue neutral would depend upon the people of SVN. He did not prejudge the issue.

The DRVN realize that the "loss" of SVN for the Americans would set off (what was the atomic expression?) a chain reaction which would extend much further. The USA is in a difficult position, because Khanh's troops will no longer fight. If the war gets worse, we shall suffer greatly but we shall win. If we win in the South, the people of the world will turn against the USA. Our people will therefore accept the sacrifice, whatever they may be. But the DRVN will not enter the war.

If the war were pushed to the North, "nous sommes un pays socialiste, vous savez et le peuple se dressera". But we shall not force the USA, we shall not provoke the USA.

As far as the ICC is concerned, we are very glad to have you here. But don't put too many items on the agenda, don't give yourself too much work to do.

August 8, 1964

STATE 169 to Amembassy OTTAWA, STATE 383 to Amembassy SAIGON, Immediate, (TS/Exdis), Sent 8 Aug 64, 4:41 P.M.

Following message was handed directly to Canadian Embassy here for transmittal to Seaborn by fastest channel. This is for your information only.

QUOTE Canadians are urgently asked to have Seaborn during August 10 visit make following points (as having been conveyed to him by US Government since August 6):

A. Re Tonkin Gulf actions, which almost certainly will come up:

1. . . . Neither the MADDOX or any other destroyer was in any way associated with any attack on the DRV islands.

2. Regarding the August 4 attack by the DRV on the two US destroyers, the Americans were and are at a complete loss to understand the DRV motive. . . . About the only reasonable hypothesis was that North Viet-Nam was intent either upon making it appear that the United States was a INNER QUOTE paper tiger END INNER QUOTE or upon provoking the United States.

3. The American response was directed solely to patrol craft and installations acting in direct support of them. As President Johnson stated: INNER QUOTE Our response for the present will be limited and fitting. END INNER QUOTE

4. In view of uncertainty aroused by the deliberate and unprovoked DRV attacks this character, US has necessarily carried out precautionary deployments of additional air power to SVN and Thailand.

31
B. Re basic American position:

9. Mr. Seaborn should conclude with the following new points:

a. That the events of the past few days should add credibility to the statement made last time, that INNER QUOTE US public and official patience with North Vietnamese aggression is growing extremely thin. END INNER QUOTE

NT
b. That the US Congressional Resolutions was passed with near unanimity, strongly re-affirming the unity and determination of the US Government and people not only with respect to any further attacks on US military forces but more broadly to continue to oppose firmly, by all necessary means, DRV efforts to subvert and conquer South Viet-Nam and Laos.

yet
in
debate
c. That the US has come to the view that the DRV role in South Viet-Nam and Laos is critical. If the DRV persists in its present course, it can expect to continue to suffer the consequences.

d. That the DRV knows what it must do if the peace is to be restored.

e. That the US has ways and means of measuring the DRV's participation in, and direction and control of, the war on South Viet-Nam and in Laos and will be carefully watching the DRV's response to what Mr. Seaborn is telling them. UNQUOTE.

RUSK

August 9, 1964

STATE 389 to Amembassy SAIGON (TS/Exdis) Flash, Sent 9 Aug 64, 6:42 A.M.

REF Saigon 362, repeated Info as Saigon 8 to Ottawa

request you immediately contact Seaborn with view to deleting two words QUOTE to continue UNQUOTE from last sentence paragraph 9 c.

RUSK

August 18, 1964

SAIGON 467 to SecState (TS/Exdis) Priority, Rec'd 18 Aug 64, 2:07 P.M.

Deptel 383

Seaborn called on Sullivan August 17 to show him copies his reports (which presumably Dept has seen) concerning his recent visit to Hanoi. As Dept probably aware, Seaborn was under instructions

omit last two points reftel in his discussions with Pham Van Dong, but otherwise feels he made all points practically verbatim.

Principal observation which Seaborn expressed re his conversation was sense satisfaction that Phan Van Dong, despite his angry reaction to Seaborn presentation, was unhesitating in his statement that channel of communication to US should stay open and that Seaborn should continue to bear US messages, no RPT no matter how unpleasant they may be.

TAYLOR

August 17, 1964

Report of Conversation with Prime Minister Pham Van Dong-
Hanoi, August 13, 1964

(The following is close to a verbatim account of Prime Minister Pham Van Dong's remarks.)

2. We wish to have the best possible relations with the I.C.C.

3. . . . The Government of the U.S.A. is obliged to carry out aggression against us. Official circles both political and military have decided that it is necessary to carry the war to the north in order to find a way out of the impasse in which they find themselves in the south. This is their goal and they have been pushed by it into attacking us. We see in this fact the essential cause of the act of aggression of August 5. . . .

correct

4. President Johnson worries also of course about the coming electoral battle in which it is necessary to outbid the Republican candidate. Hence the attempt to internationalize the war.

5. If we throw light in this way on the real reasons for the incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin, it enables us to make some evaluation of what the situation may be in the future. The essential causes, that is to say, remain and it is therefore possible that the Government of the U.S.A. will be led to new acts of aggression. They have said it themselves.

6. This is a very dangerous situation, I repeat a very dangerous situation. . . . There is no way out in the south and they are trying to carry the war to the north as a way out. That is the real miscalculation. Up to now we have tried to avoid serious trouble; but it becomes more difficult now because the war has been carried to our territory. . . .

7. . . . We are a socialist country and socialist countries will come to our aid. . . .

8. If the U.S.A. is thinking of a new Korean war it should realize that conditions are not the same. . . . If the war comes to North Vietnam, it will come to the whole of Southeast Asia, with unforeseeable consequences. . . . We do not hide the fact that the people will have to make many sacrifices, but we are in a state of legitimate defence because the war is imposed upon us.

9. . . .

10. The solution lies in a return to the Geneva Agreement of 1954. . . .

11. The I.C.C. is called upon to play a more and more important role. . . .

12. . . .

August 19, 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Secretary

FROM: S/VN - Michael V. Forrestal

THROUGH: S/S

Herewith the second installment of the Seaborn talks.

The verbatim account of the conversation still remains to come from Ottawa.

Attachment

Fm Candel SAIGON TSec Bacon (TS/Eyes Only/No Dis), Immed.,

(For Immediate Delivery to Arnold Smith and FarEast Div)

Ref OurTel 419, Aug 15

Pham Van Dong's angry reaction to latest USA msg is not RPT not surprising. . . .

2. After visit to Hanoi and interview with FM I am still little wiser as to DRVN motivations in launching Aug 2 and Aug 4 attacks on USA vessels. . . . They may also believe, despite President Johnson's reassurances, that there is chance of new USA attack even if they do

not RPT not make it. Again, they are at least acting as if they were their est. and are taking various precautionary measures (air raid drills, slit trenches, brick bunkers etc. and reportedly at least preparation for evacuation of women and children).

3. . . .

4. Pham Van Dong gave no RPT no indication of being worried by firmness of USA msg I delivered and in fact its immediate effect was to produce anger rather than desire to discuss way out. But I find it mildly encouraging that he did calm down as he talked further and significant that (he?) should state unequivocally that he wanted to keep open DRVN-USA channel of communication. I do not RPT not however as result of this interview see likelihood of his using it for some time at least to put forward to USA side proposal or requests for discussion. I think he is genuinely convinced that things are bound to go his way in Indochina and that there is therefore no RPT no need to seek compromises.

5. . . .

SEABORN

December 3, 1964

STATE 1210 to Amembassy SAIGON, STATE 645 to Amembassy OTTAWA, Immediate, (Top S/Exdis), Sent 3 Dec 64, 6:51 P.M.

The following message has been handed directly to Canadian Embassy here for transmittal to Seaborn through fastest channel. This is for your information only.

Quote: Canadians are asked to have Seaborn take following position during his next visit to Hanoi which, we understand, is currently scheduled for December 7th or 10th (Embtel 1618).

The United States has nothing to add to the points made by Seaborn on his last visit to Hanoi in August. All the recent indications from Washington, however, point to a continued and increasing determination on the part of the US to assist the South Vietnamese in their struggle. Although he has no specific message on this trip, Seaborn has noted from its public statements increased US concern at DRV role in direct support of Viet Cong, and this together with reported high-level meetings Washington makes him feel that time is ripe for any new message Hanoi may wish to convey.

Seaborn should convey attitude of real personal concern over the growing possibility of direct confrontation between GVN and DRV. End quote.

FYI: Purpose of this approach is to probe for any new DRV reactions.

HARRIMAN

Candel SAIGON 773 to Sec Bacon (TS/Nodis), Immediate,

(For Immediate Delivery to Arnold Smith and FarEast Dov)

Ref: WashDC Tel 4189 Dec 5 and your Tel 7833 Dec 4

2. In mtg with Havan Lau only Vietnamese personality with whom I talked, I developed theme in Wash DC Tel 4189 He did not RPT not pick up directly any of these ideas. Notes were taken throughout mtg and I assume higher authorities will be informed. . . .

3. . . .

SEABORN

SAIGON 774 to TT External (Confidential), Immediate DE Delhi
TT LDN EmbParis, Nato Paris, Geneva, Wash DD, Permisy CDS

3. Foreign Reps with whom I spoke all referred to DRVN concern over possibility of USA air strikes, though there was differing interpretation as to how likely DRVN thought this to be. None seemed to expect anything of a serious nature to be imminent. To those who tended to play down likelihood, I cautioned against complacency and said I did not RPT not rule out possibility of air strikes in retaliation for growing DRVN complicity in SVN insurgency. I detected during this visit to Hanoi none of tension (partly officially inspired, partly genuine) which was so evident in mid-Aug just after Gulf of Tonkin incident. Not, as already reported; is there any sign of renewed digging of air-raid shelters or widespread drilling of militia.

4. . . .

8. There was general agreement as to DRVN concern lest UN become involved in IndoChina. Some Reps apparently did not RPT not think this would be deplorable development but they all agreed that DRVN would refuse to allow UN intervention. . . .

9. By and large, impression gained . . . is no RPT no expectation of early and startling developments in Vietnam. To employ the DRVN jargon, the situation is not RPT not yet ripe for it.

SEABORN

January 29, 1965

AmEmbassy PARIS 4295 to SecState (Limdis/Noform/S), Rec'd 29 Jan 65,
2 P.M.

EmbOff has been shown in strictest secrecy large portions of record conversations on Viet Nam held here between ranking officials of Quai on one hand and separately with Chinese Charge Sung and North Vietnamese delegate Mai Van Bo on other. Conversation with Bo took place December 22 and was renewed again last week. . . .

In addition to discussion of international conference along Geneva lines, conversation with North Vietnamese XHKKXQK,* essentially to three questions put by French (1) Would Hanoi accept and join in guarantees for neutral and completely independent South Vietnam? (2) Would Hanoi agree to knock off political and military subversion in SVN? (3) Would Hanoi accept some control mechanism more serious and with wider powers than present ICC? Total ineffectiveness of latter and paralysis through veto demonstrated, especially in Laos.

Mai Van Bo showed considerable interest in (1) and (3) and spoke of settling on basis 1954 Geneva Accords but was obviously embarrassed and evasive on (2), since affirmative response would have constituted confession. French told Bo frankly they could not accept Vietnamese protestations that there was only American intervention and that French were convinced of Hanoi subversive role. If Hanoi did not wish to own up, would they at least undertake guarantee not to engage in such activities in future?

At second meeting in January above questions explored further and French said that in order to discuss meaningfully, Bo should obtain precise answers from Hanoi on above three points. No answer yet received.

. . . .
*As received, will service upon request.

February 27, 1965

STATE 942 to Amembassy OTTAWA (S/Exdis) Immediate, Sent 27 Feb 65, 4:11 P.M.

We have passed to Canadian Embassy here text of that portion of Ambassador Cabot's presentation at latest Warsaw talks dealing with Viet-Nam situation. Text as follows: QUOTE. I have been instructed to restate United States policy in South Viet-Nam. Our constant policy has been to assist South Viet-Nam in its efforts to maintain its freedom and independence in the face of Communist aggression directed and supported by Hanoi. So long as the Viet Cong, directed

NSAM 213

and supported by North Viet-Nam and encouraged by your side, continues its attacks in South Viet-Nam, the United States will find it necessary to afford the Government of Viet-Nam such help as it desires and needs to restore peace. The pressures being mounted by the North Vietnamese across the frontiers of South Viet-Nam are intolerable. We must and will take action to stop them.

... It was our hope that the 1954 Geneva arrangements would allow the Governments in Indochina to exist in peace.

We would be satisfied if the Geneva agreements of 1954 were observed by all parties. . . . Any evidence of willingness on the part of the DRV to return to these accords would be noted and welcomed by our side.

... If there is any doubt in Hanoi as to this U.S. position, I hope that you will convey it to them. UNQUOTE.

We have asked Canadian Embassy here to seek Ottawa's approval for having Blair Seaborn convey above quoted passage to appropriate Hanoi authorities in course of next visit Hanoi. . . .

RUSK

March 5, 1965

CanDel SAIGON 203 (TopSec Bacon/No Distrib), Immed.,

FOR ARNOLD SMITH and FAR EAST DIV

2. On afternoon Mar 4 I paid second call on Ha Van Lau in lieu of call on PM. Incidentally Stawicki managed without difficulty to see P.M. for farewell call. I explained nature of msg and then read him slowly French translation of full text of Cabot's statement in Wsaw as given in Wash, D.C. Tel 642 Feb 27.

3. Interpreter took full notes. Ha Van Lau said he would pass msg on to PM though his personal opinion was that it contained nothing new. They had already had report of latest WSAW mtg from Chinese.

4. Ha Van Lau then made personal comment on msg and general situation. It contained no RPT no new elements and is of so little interest that I am sending close to verbatim account only by Bag.

5. . . .

6. My personal opinion is that in present circumstances DRVN have very little interest in CDM channel of communication with USA. They have never taken initiative to use it and this time were not RPT not even sufficiently interested to arrange for me to see PM.

7. . . .

SEABORN

March 4, 1965

AmEmbassy PARIS 5008 to SecState Wash DC (S/Lindis/Nofoan), Priority,
Rec'd 4 Mar 65, 2:02 P.M.

Following from Quai IndoChina Chief Brethes:

Chief DRV Commercial Delegation Mai Van Bo came to Quai yesterday for discussion of unspecified disagreement over French Lycee in Hanoi. He took opportunity to remark that while previously DRV had been ready to consider negotiation of some sort, US actions had changed situation. Negotiations no longer matter for consideration at this time, and people of North and South Viet Nam were going to defend themselves. Tone of Bo's comments was very stern and French concluded he had probably received instructions avoid any discussion with French on possible political settlement.

BOHLEN

March 7, 1965

AmEmbassy SAIGON 2880 to SecState Wash DC (S/Exdis), Rec'd 7 Mar 65, 2PM.

Seaborn also discussed his general impression on which he drafting separate report. Because of his inability to see any senior official or have any substantive discussion with any Vietnamese, and discussions with Eastern Bloc diplomats primary impression is that Hanoi thus far not seriously concerned by strikes, it being Hanoi's interpretation

of events that strikes are only a limited attempt by us to improve its bargaining position for conference which USG is strenuously seeking in order to extricate itself from war in SVN which USG now recognizes is lost. Thus Hanoi not very concerned by strikes which have not seriously hurt it and as USG is one urgently seeking conference it is to Hanoi's advantage to continue to hold back on agreeing to any conference which at this time could only, as in 1954, result in depriving DRV of that full victory which it sees in sight as turmoil in SVN continues and pressures on US for withdrawal continue to mount.

TAYLOR

March 27, 1965

STATE 2718 to Amembassy SAIGON (TS/EXDIS), Immediate, Sent 27 Mar 65, 3:48 P.M.

We are considering asking Canadians to instruct Seaborn to bear message to Hanoi, when he leaves May 31, for delivery to senior DRV official if and only if his first contacts with his normal liaison contact, in which he would inquire about availability senior officials, meet with forthcoming response and DRV initiative for appointment. . . .

Proposed presentation Seaborn would make to senior official would be as follows:

1. In my last visit, I conveyed a statement of US views concerning South Viet-Nam, which followed the lines of what the USG had stated to Peiping representatives at Warsaw. . . .
2. Since my last visit, the USG has of course further publicly stated its position in President Johnson's speech of April 7 and in the US reply to the note of the 17 non-aligned nations, in which the USG further defined its readiness for unconditional discussions, its objectives, and the sequence of actions that might lead to a peaceful solution of the problem.
3. The USG has been disappointed to note that actions in the South supported and directed by Hanoi appear to continue without change, and even to be currently intensified. . . .
4. In addition, the USG informed Hanoi on May 12 that it was undertaking a temporary suspension of bombing attacks for a period of several days. The USG regrets that this action met with no response from Hanoi neither directly not in the form of any significant reductions of armed actions in South Viet-Nam by forces

whose actions in the view of the USG, can be decisively affected from North Viet-Nam. Accordingly, the USG, in coordination with the Republic of Viet-Nam, was obliged to resume bombing attacks. Nonetheless, the USG continues to consider the possibility of working toward a solution by mutual example.

5. In making these points, the USG again must make it clear that in the absence of action or discussions leading to a political solution it must and will take whatever actions may be necessary to meet and to counter the offensive actions being carried out by North Viet-Nam against South Viet-Nam and against American forces acting to assist the Republic of Viet-Nam.

6. If but only if senior DRV representative gets on to Pham Van Dong four points of April 8, Seaborn would reply that he has no message from USG on this subject. However, his study of four points would indicate that some might be acceptable to USG but that others would clearly be unacceptable. It has also not been clear whether DRV statements should be taken to mean that the recognition of these points was required as, in effect, a condition for any discussions. He would say that the USG appears to have made its position clear, that it would accept unconditional discussions in the full sense, with either side free to bring up any matter, and that he would be personally interested in whether the DRV representative wished to clarify the question of whether their recognition is regarded by the DRV as a condition to any discussions. End proposed text.

....
RUSK

May 28, 1965

Amembassy SAIGON 3927 to SecState Wash DC (TS/Exdis), Immediate,
Rec'd 28 May 1965, 4:10 A.M. (Passed White House, DOD, CIA, 5/28/65, 4:55 A.M.)

Ref DEPTTEL 2718

We see no objection to Seaborn seeking in manner set forth first paragraph RefTel to make approach.

With respect to substance, we offer following comments:

censored? Last part third sentence of numbered para one appears to be worded in somewhat more astringent terms than useful or desirable in such private approach, although it is important point be made.

We are concerned by degree to which numbered para four continues to lead us towards commitment to cease bombing simply in return for cessation or even reduction of VC armed actions in SVN. Without laboring point, believe it is important not at this time at least to give away our position on withdrawal of VC.

June 6, 1965

Amembassy SAIGON 4083 to SecState (Confid/Lindis), Rec'd Jun 7, 1965,
2:06 A.M.

Canadian ICC Commissioner Blair Seaborn told EmbOff this morning results of his latest week-long visit to Hanoi, from which he had returned yesterday.

Seaborn said that he is persuaded from his conversations with diplomats and DRV officials that DRV is not now interested in any negotiations. He said that he was able to see new Foreign Minister Trinh but that discussion had revealed nothing new.

Trinh followed standard line that US offer of unconditional discussion was "deceitful" since US continued build-up in South Vietnam and bombing of North. Seaborn pressed Trinh to elaborate on "Four Points," asking whether points intended to be seen as preconditions to talks or as result of talks or as ultimate goals. Trinh remained deliberately vague and gave no clear answers. . . .

.....
TAYLOR